

CLAIMS

-What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A mobile electronic communication device comprising:
2 a transceiver;
3 a keypad having a plurality of keys;
4 a light unit coupled to the keypad; and
5 a processor unit coupled to the transceiver, keypad and light unit, wherein the
6 processor unit is configured to cause the light unit to output light that indicates a
7 source of a received message.
- 1 2. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 1, wherein each key of
2 the plurality of keys is associated with a corresponding contact of a contact list.
- 1 3. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 2, wherein keys
2 corresponding to contacts on the contact list are numeric keys of the keypad.
- 1 4. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 2, wherein, in response
2 to an actuation of a key corresponding to a contact on the contact list, the processor
3 unit is configured to cause the mobile electronic communication device to dial a
4 telephone number associated with that contact.
- 1 5. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 2 further comprising a
2 display, wherein in response to an actuation of a key corresponding to a contact on
3 the contact list, the processor unit is configured to cause information related to a
4 message received from that contact to be displayed on the display.

1 6. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 2, wherein the mobile
2 electronic communication device is configured to receive messages of two or more
3 types, wherein the processor unit is configured to cause the light unit to output the
4 light with modulation that depends on the received message's type.

1 7. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 2, wherein the received
2 message includes an indication of its importance, wherein the processor unit is
3 configured to cause the light unit to output the light with modulation that depends on
4 the importance of the received message.

1 8. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 2, wherein the
2 processor unit is configured to cause the light unit to illuminate a key of the keypad,
3 the key being associated with a contact of the contact list, the message received
4 from the contact associated with the key.

1 9. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 8, wherein the light unit
2 can simultaneously illuminate another key of the keypad to indicate that a message
3 has been received from a contact associated with the other key.

1 10. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 1, wherein the
2 processor unit is configured to cause the light unit to output light with modulation
3 that depends on an age of a message received by the mobile electronic
4 communication device.

1 11. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 10, wherein the
2 modulated light has a color that depends on the relative age of a received message.

1 12. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 10, wherein the
2 modulated light has a blink rate that indicates the number of messages received
3 from a contact in a contact list.

1 13. The mobile electronic communication device in claim 10, wherein the
2 message is a most recent message received from a contact in a contact list.

1 14. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 13, wherein the
2 message is an unread message received from the contact.

1 15. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 10, wherein the relative
2 age is indicated using a plurality of predetermined age categories.

1 16. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 15, wherein each age
2 category of the plurality of age categories is represented by a predetermined color of
3 light that can be outputted by the light unit.

1 17. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 15, wherein each age
2 category of the plurality of age categories is represented by a predetermined
3 number of light flashes within a cycle.

1 18. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 1, wherein the message
2 is a SMS message.

1 19. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 1, wherein the keypad
2 is a virtual keypad implemented using a touch-screen display, the light illuminating

3 the key being modulated through an appearance of the key being displayed by the
4 touch-screen display.

1 20. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 1, wherein each key of
2 the plurality of keys of the keypad is at least partially translucent.

1 21. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 1, wherein the light unit
2 comprises an LED circuit configured to selectively output light having a color
3 selected from a set of a plurality of preselected colors, the LED circuit having at
4 least one LED coupled to each key of the plurality of keys of the keypad.

1 22. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 21, wherein a LED
2 coupled to a key of the plurality of keys of the keypad is a multicolor LED.

1 23. A mobile electronic communication device, comprising:
2 means for receiving a message;
3 a keypad having a plurality of keys; and
4 illumination means for selectively illuminating one or more keys of the
5 plurality of keys with modulated light to indicate a source of a message received by
6 the means for receiving.

1 24. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 23, wherein each key of
2 the plurality of keys is associated with a corresponding contact of a contact list.

1 25. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 24, wherein keys
2 corresponding to contacts on the contact list are numeric keys of the keypad.

1 26. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 25, further comprising
2 dialing means for dialing, in response to an actuation of a key, a telephone number
3 associated with the contact corresponding to the actuated key.

1 27. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 24, further comprising a
2 display, wherein an actuation of a key corresponding to a contact on the contact list
3 causes information related to messages received from that contact to be displayed
4 on the display.

1 28. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 24, wherein, in
2 response to receiving a message from a contact, the illumination means illuminates
3 a key associated with the contact.

1 29. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 28, wherein the
2 illumination means simultaneously illuminates another key of the keypad to indicate
3 that a message has been received from a contact associated with the other key.

1 30. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 23, wherein the keypad
2 is a virtual keypad implemented using a touch-screen display, the light illuminating
3 the key being modulated through the appearance of the key being displayed by the
4 touch-screen display.

1 31. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 23, wherein the
2 modulated light is modulated to indicate an age of a message received by the
3 mobile electronic communication device.

1 32. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 31, wherein the
2 modulated light has a color that depends on the relative age of a message received
3 from the contact corresponding to the key.

1 33. A method for use with a mobile electronic communication having a plurality of
2 keys, each key corresponding to a contact of a contact list, the method comprising:
3 receiving a message;
4 determining a sender of the received message; and
5 illuminating a key of the plurality of keys when the sender is a contact of the
6 contact list, the illuminated key corresponding to the sender of the message.

1 34. The method claim 33, further comprising determining an age of the received
2 signal.

1 35. The method of claim 34, wherein determining the age of the received
2 message comprises determining which age range of a plurality of predetermined
3 age ranges contains the age of the received message.

1 36. The method claim 34, further comprising modulating the light as a function of
2 the determined age.

1 37. The method of claim 36, wherein modulating the light comprises causing the
2 light to have a color selected from a plurality of colors, each color of the plurality of
3 colors corresponding to an age range of the plurality of predetermined age ranges.

1 38. The method claim 33, further comprising modulating the light to indicate the a
2 number of messages received by the contact corresponding to the key.

1 39. The method claim 38, wherein the modulation comprises causing the light to
2 flash while illuminating the key, the light flashing a number of times in a cycle equal
3 to a number of stored messages sent by the contact corresponding to the key.

1 40. The method of claim 33, further comprising illuminating another key of the
2 plurality of keys when a message from another contact on the contact list has been
3 received.

1 41. The method of claim 33, further comprising displaying a message log of
2 stored messages received from the contact in response to the key corresponding to
3 the contact on the contact list being activated.

1 42. The method of claim 33, further comprising causing the mobile electronic
2 communication device to dial a telephone number belonging to a contact on the
3 contact list in response to an activation of a key corresponding to that contact.

1 43. A mobile electronic communication device, comprising:
2 a plurality of keys;
3 means for storing a contact list, key contact on the contact list corresponding
4 to a key of the plurality of keys;
5 means for receiving a message;
6 means for determining a sender of the received message; and

7 means for illuminating a key of the plurality of keys when the sender is a
8 contact of the contact list, the illuminated key corresponding to the sender of the
9 message.

1 44. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 43, further comprising
2 means for determining whether the received message is unread.

1 45. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 43, further comprising
2 means for determining an age of the received signal.

1 46. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 45, wherein the means
2 for determining the age of the received message determines which age range of a
3 plurality of predetermined age ranges contains the age of the received message.

1 47. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 45, further comprising
2 means for modulating the light as a function of the determined age.

1 48. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 47, wherein the means
2 for modulating the light causes the light to have a color selected from a plurality of
3 colors, each color of the plurality of colors corresponding to an age range of the
4 plurality of predetermined age ranges.

1 49. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 43, wherein the means
2 for illuminating causes the light to flash while illuminating the key, the light flashing a
3 number of times in a cycle equal to a number of stored messages sent by the
4 contact corresponding to the key.

1 50. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 43, wherein the means
2 for illuminating illuminates another key of the plurality of keys when a message from
3 another contact on the contact list has been received.

1 51. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 43, further comprising
2 means for displaying a message log of stored messages received from the contact
3 in response to an actuation of the key corresponding to the contact.

1 52. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 43, further comprising
2 means for dialing a telephone number in response to an actuation of a key, the
3 telephone number belonging to the contact corresponding to the actuated key.

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1 53. A mobile electronic communication device comprising:
2 a transceiver;
3 a keypad having a plurality of keys;
4 a light unit coupled to the keypad;
5 a memory to store received messages; and
6 a processor unit coupled to the transceiver, keypad, memory and light unit,
7 wherein the processor unit is programmed to determine the age of a received
8 message and to cause the light unit to output light with modulation that depends on
9 the determined age.

1 54. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 53, wherein the
2 modulated light has a color that depends on the age of the received message.

1 55. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 53 wherein the
2 modulated light has a blink rate that indicates the age of the received message.

1 56. The mobile electronic communication device in claim 53, wherein the
2 message is a most recent message received from a contact in a contact list.

1 57. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 56, wherein the
2 message is an unread message received from the contact.

1 58. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 53, wherein the age is
2 determined as one of a plurality of predetermined age categories.

1 59. The mobile electronic communication device of claim 58, wherein each age
2 category of the plurality of age categories is represented by a predetermined color of
3 light that can be outputted by the light unit.

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